The potential determinants of young people's sense of justice: an international study

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Abstract

This paper uses reports from 13,000 grade 9 pupils in five countries to examine issues such as whether they were treated fairly at school, trust their teachers and adults in wider society, are willing to sacrifice teacher attention to help others, and support the cultural integration of recent immigrants. Using such reports as 'outcomes' in a multi-stage regression model, it is clear that they are largely unrelated to school-level pupil mix variables. To some extent, these outcomes are stratified by pupil and family background in the same way for all countries. However, the largest association is with pupil reported experience of interactions with their teachers. Teachers appear to be a - major influence on young peoples' sense of justice, and the principles they apply in deciding whether something is fair. The paper concludes by suggesting ways in which schools and teachers could take advantage of this finding.

Keywords

Pupil voice, equity in education, logistic regression, school effect, European Union

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Introduction

Young people in developed countries generally gain skills and qualifications and learn to socialise during their compulsory schooling. They also appear to learn how to assess whether something is fair or not (EGREES 2008), and these attitudes to wider society can be fairly long-lasting or even lifelong (EGREES 2005). But how could pupils' experiences at school shape such enduring concepts of fairness and equity? Understanding this is important for equity, perhaps for attainment, and could also have an economic payoff (Levin 2009). This paper uses a new large-scale study to look at the principles of justice in school and beyond, as they appear to young people aged 14, and to examine how individual views may be influenced by the (mis)application of these principles by those they interact with.

There are several well-known principles, such as equality of treatment or of outcome, that purport to lay down what is fair (Rawls 1971, Trannoy 1999). But they might be contradictory if applied together in the same domains or settings (Dubet 2006). Any single formal criterion intended to enhance justice will be flawed in the sense that it will tend to lead to injustice in some situations. We might want teachers to discriminate between pupils in terms of talent, learning difficulties, behaviour or effort, but not on the basis of characteristics that are not their responsibility such as sex or ethnicity. This is the basis on which responsibility theory distinguishes between fair allocation of resources between individuals defined by their 'talent' and their 'effort'. One is deemed not responsible for talent, so fair might mean equal, or even slanted towards the disadvantaged. One is responsible for effort, and so a greater reward for some can be deemed fair (Roemer 1996, Fleurbaey 1996). If we adhere inflexibly to a principle of equality of opportunity, then the likely result in education will be marked inequality of outcomes. If, on the other hand, we seek greater equality of educational outcomes then we may need to treat individuals unequally from the outset, identifying the most disadvantaged and giving them enhanced (and so unequal) opportunities. Universal principles must be adapted to each specific set of interactions and actors (Boudon 1995).

Do pupils and their teachers comprehend and appreciate the complexity outlined briefly here? There is some evidence that pupils are sensitive to these kinds of complications. Pupils struggling because of inherent weakness or even a temporary problem like mobility or illness are excepted from equal treatment in the view of other pupils. They are 'permitted' greater teacher concern because they are not to blame, in contrast to those showing lack of willingness or interest (Stevens 2009). Young people appear to distinguish between moral judgements of welfare and rights and justice (such as their effect on others), that have transgressions which are wrong regardless of any laws, and social conventions (such as expectations and norms), that have transgressions which are acceptable if no explicit rules prohibit them (Nucci 2001). Are there differences between countries and educational approaches in the application of principles of fairness in schools? And do these differences influence what pupils regard as fair? We need to ask young people themselves, and we did this by translating examples of the various criteria into examples statements and vignettes with variable outcomes. In each example we were interested in an individual pupil's experience, their experience of the treatment of others, and their view on how they should be treated.

Young people and children have a right to be heard on matters that affect their lives, according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – http://www.therightssite.org.uk – and in the legislation of many developed countries. For example, in England, the 2002 Education Act gave local authorities and school governing bodies a duty to consider consultation with pupils over matters affecting them, and this duty has expanded over time from school uniform matters and councils to teaching arrangements (Stewart 2008). Pupil involvement is important because the issues of interest to them may be rather different from those advanced by their teachers (Duffield et al. 2000, Hamill and Boyd 2002, McBeath et al. 2003).

However, it is still far from standard practice to involve pupils in genuine consultation about their learning (McIntyre et al. 2005). Anyway, in some cases, the covert purpose of engaging with pupils is to increase pupil performance and attainment in academic terms or to improve pupil self-confidence, rather than out of genuine interest in their views (Rose et al. 1999, Noyes 2005). They are perhaps treated more

as the objects of research than as real informants (Wood 2003, Whitehead and Clough 2004). This means that their influence on matters of concern to them might be small (TES 2006, Wyness 2006). It is also important to note that the most articulate and resourceful young people are often those whose opinions are represented in research, and whose voices are most clearly heard (but see Riley 2004, Rose and Shevlin 2004). If researchers neglect to consider specifically the views of disadvantaged pupils or even middle-of-the-road pupils, then the use of pupil voice in practice might serve to reinforce existing hierarchies, in which only the needs of the most advantaged pupils are met. That is why a census-style survey of the pupils themselves, with special attention to pupils educated outside mainstream, is used for the research reported in this paper.

Methods

The fieldwork took place in 2006-08, involving teaching units containing pupils with an average age of 14, in grade 9 of their secondary education in Belgium (French-speaking), the Czech Republic, England, France and Italy. These countries form part of an existing EU-funded network used to examine equity in European nations (EGREES 2005, EGREES 2008). All five countries have developed economies, with compulsory schooling from a young age. At the age of the pupils in this survey, those in Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, and Italy to a lesser extent, are tracked into routes defined by religious choice, academic and vocational programmes, or attainment, and so by social class. The attainment gaps between social and economic groups tend to be higher in these countries. For example, using proportionate attainment gaps (Gorard et al. 2001), the PISA 2006 country profiles (http://pisacountry.acer.edu.au/) reveal that the gap between the 5th and 95th percentile of attainment is 39% in the Czech Republic and Italy, 38% in Belgium, and 36% in France. In England there is currently less formal tracking, and the lowest proportionate difference between highest and lowest attainers (35%), but there are clear differences in the perceived prestige of types of schools. This situation has been founds to be the same on each occasion monitored (EGREES 2005, 2008).

A list of all relevant schools in each country was sorted into size order, and divided into 100 sub-lists of approximately equal-sized schools. Two cases were selected randomly from each list (the second case being the reserve). To these were added six institutions in each country where young people were educated away from mainstream, including juvenile detention centres and special schools. On average, the achieved sample of schools was around 80% of the ideal of 100 in each country, giving a total of 450 schools (with around 13,000 pupils), plus the special cases (Table 1). As far as we can tell from official data, over 90% of requested pupils completed a form in each school. The number of replacement schools that had to be used was high, and the number of pupils per school varied, meaning that we do not treat them as a genuine cluster randomised sample. We are more concerned with the effect sizes of differences between groups of pupils and schools than with the probability of being able to generalise from each national sample to the population of that country. However, comparison with the sampling frame, the achieved characteristics of the sample, and the range of schools taking part suggests that the sample is representative of each country (Education at a Glance 2007, Gorard and Smith 2010).

Table 1 - Number of pupil forms returned, by country

Belgium (Fr)	1608
Czech Republic	1512
England	2836
France	3627
Italy	2992
Total	12575

Our pupil-level questionnaire was sent to co-operating schools, for completion in a registration period or personal, social and health education period. Some schools requested using the instrument with the whole year group as more convenient. The survey was designed to last no more than 35 minutes. In the prior extensive pilot of 6,000 cases, we found no difference, once teachers had been instructed in its use, between delivery by teachers and delivery by researchers. Some young people in institutions for pupils educated ‘otherwise’ were given an abbreviated version to

complete, some had questions read and their answers written for them, and some took part as though it were a structured interview. Similarly, some pupils with additional needs in mainstream schools were assisted in completion. The instrument addressed the 'amount' and type of injustice pupils reported experiencing, and the perpetrators of any injustice, since the beginning of the current school year. It presented vignettes on hypothetical situations in and out of school, giving us the possibility of comparing pupils' actual experiences of fairness with their ideal model of a fair school. For example, pupils were asked if they found school a fair place, whether teachers and a range of other adults are generally trustworthy, and whether in-migrants should adopt the local customs of their host country.

The instrument looked at the potential outcomes of school experience, such as occupational aspiration, and at external factors such as the pupils' home background, their first language, country of birth, parental occupation and education, treatment by parents, and their wider political and societal views. For example, pupils were asked about their levels of attainment at school, whether each of their parents or carers had attended university, since extensive piloting suggested that this led to the most reliable answers about parental education. Pupils were asked to say which of five sets of jobs, adapted through piloting from the UK Standard Occupational Classifications, or SOC2000, most nearly resembled the job of each parent. Or they could name an unlisted occupation or specify none, self-employed or 'don't know'. The full instrument appears in EGREES (2008).

The models presented here are derived from logistic regression analysis with binary 'dependent' variables – such as trust in others, or whether pupils found school fair. In each case, around 50% of pupils were in each category - such as whether they were willing for a pupil with difficulties to receive extra help at their expense or not. Each regression model used 'independent' variables to predict which category a pupil would have chosen, so increasing the accuracy from near 50% to perhaps 70% or more (so explaining 40% of the residual variation). Independent variables were entered in four blocks representing pupil background (such as parental occupation), aggregated background (e.g. school-level summaries of parental occupation), parental support (such as whether parents talked to children about schooling), and experience of justice at school (such as whether pupils were bullied). Each stage can only take up

and try to explain any variation in outcomes that is left unexplained by an earlier stage. The stages represent a rough biographical order, and so protect the analysis from the invalid influence of later proxies (although the models were also run in reverse order and the substantive findings did not change). As with all such models, they do not represent any kind of definitive test but are a way of filtering the results to see potential patterns. For comparison purposes, the same variables were used to 'predict' an entirely random binary outcome, with the same split, to assess the dangers of fitting any such model *post hoc*. These random models barely improved from the baseline figures, and this provided strong reassurance that the additional variance explained in the tables below is unlikely to be spurious. This, along with inability to predict some other potential outcomes with equivalent success, suggest that the models presented here *can* help to partition the possible impact of background, parent, school, teachers and other pupils. The results are described starting with outcomes related to school.

The treatment of pupils by teachers

Pupils' reported experiences at the hands of their teachers in school during the previous academic year are quite consistent across social, economic and family background groups, and in all countries, except where noted. In all countries, males, females, high and low attainers, those from families with professional educated parents and those with less educated or unemployed parents, recent immigrants and second language speakers all report pretty much the same experiences. This is also true for most of the other pupil background categories. There is almost no difference, for most indicators, between pupils from families with different occupational and educational histories. Table 2, for example, shows around 43% of *all* pupils, and around 43% of pupils in each category agree that teachers tended to respect pupil opinions. The small variation that there is reinforces the message that pupils with potential disadvantages, such as those with parents in lower status jobs, do not report experiencing greater potential injustice in these terms.

Table 2 – Percentage of pupils agreeing with statement ‘Teachers respected pupil's opinions even if they disagreed with them’ – an example of lack of variation between categories

All	mother ‘low status’ job	mother no job	mother not university	father professional occupation	father went to university
43	44	43	43	43	43

Note: low status occupations, as classified here across five countries, include temporary and unskilled work as opposed to professional and intermediate occupations.

In general, the same percentage of each pupil category agreed that their teachers treated them with respect, explained until they understood, encouraged autonomy in learning, generally treated all pupils the same, gave extra help where needed, punished pupils fairly, and marked work fairly. Of course, the situation is not ideal, since the percentage agreeing these things about teachers can often be low, but at least different kinds of pupils are not reporting different levels of agreement. The same lack of variation is also noticeable in some less desirable experiences – such as punishments being used unevenly, teachers getting angry with pupils, and teachers having favourites.

There is also little variation between groups of pupils in their responses to their treatment by other pupils. Pupils who reported being from different family backgrounds, at varying levels of attainment, and of different sexes, responded equivalently to questions about being left out, bullied, having something stolen, having good friends, and having friends who are immigrants or low attainers. As with pupil:teacher relationships, the most notable finding is how little stratification there is in pupil:pupil relationships.

In terms of what pupils want from school, there is widespread agreement among young people that teachers should treat all pupils with equal respect, treat their opinions with care, and take care not to humiliate any of them. According to a majority of pupils, teachers should continue explaining until everyone understands a

new topic (a threshold criterion of justice). Pupils are happy that teachers discriminate on the basis of effort and quality, and that they use praise for those who deserve it (a meritocratic criterion of justice). However, they are not prepared for teachers to treat hard-working pupils the best, more generally. In summary, pupils confirm the ideas of fairness outlined at the start of the paper. For example, they do adapt the universal principles like equal treatment to the context and actors involved.

Predicting the outcomes

Looking at the range of possible backgrounds, school settings and pupil experiences in interaction with the various 'outcomes', such as those above, can become somewhat confusing. To summarise the findings, the remainder of the paper presents five example logistic regression models, each based on one potential outcome.

Table 3 - Percentage of pupils correctly identified as agreeing with each outcome or not, by batch of variables

Outcome	base figure	pupil background	aggregated background	school experience
school was a fair place	50	56	56	78
teachers are trustworthy	56	60	60	78
willing for others to be helped	52	61	62	69
immigrants should adopt local customs	54	59	60	70
people are trustworthy	51	56	56	62

Note: the variables representing parental support add nothing of substance to any of these models, and this stage in the analysis is simply omitted in the reporting here.

Table 3 shows the percentage of pupils agreeing with each 'outcome' statement (the base figure), and the extent to which the models can improve on that percentage by adding variables representing pupil background, and school experiences. So, for

example, the model can predict which pupils considered school a fair place with 78% accuracy using both background and experience variables. This is an improvement of 56% (of the unexplained variation) on the base figure, and so represents a substantial 'effect' size.

Several things are noticeable about the models in Table 3. Most obviously, the largest proportion of variation explained (over and above the base frequency) comes from the school experience variables. Despite being entered last in each model, and so giving the opportunity for patterns due to pupil and family background to emerge first, it is pupil experience of school that appears to matter most in all models. In fact, the parental support variables make no difference to any of the models. There *is* stratification in these outcomes, in that they are somewhat patterned by pupil background (see below). The pupil mix variables, which are mostly the same pupil background variables aggregated to school-level, then make no substantial difference to any outcomes. There is no evidence of a school mix 'effect' here (as also found for other 'soft' school outcomes like aspiration by others, including Van Houtte and Stevens 2010 in secondary schools in Flanders). For these kinds of outcomes, the noticeably strong association is not what kind of pupils an individual attends school with, but what happens in interactions with teachers and others when at school. The paper outlines these experiences for each of the five similar models, in turn.

Learning whether school is fair?

Fractionally over 50% of pupils agree that school is a fair place. Who are these pupils and how do they differ from the other 50%? Pupils with high marks are more likely to find school fair (1.27 times as likely, all other things being equal). And pupils in Italy are considerably more likely to agree that their school was fair than those in the other countries (around 2 times as likely as other countries).

However, these background variables have only a weak link, and it is the experiences at school that are key. The positive experiences linked to pupils judging a school as fair include the justifiably discriminatory ideas of justice – where differential marks and punishments are deserved and so fair (Table 4). They also include the universal

ideas of justice – where respect and care are important for all without differentiation – and some unpleasant experiences with other pupils. Negative experiences, such as bullying at the hands of pupils, correspondingly reduce the perceived fairness of schools. Bullying is a major issue for pupils at school, in England at least, with one survey of over one hundred thousand pupils finding 30% reporting being bullied in the prior four weeks (OFSTED 2007). The same negative experience factors are related to other outcomes such as learning to trust teachers, whether society is fair, and whether people can be trusted more generally (see below).

Table 4 – Coefficients for pupil/school experience variables and agreeing school was a fair place

Pupils got the marks they deserved	2.27
Teachers punished bad behaviour fairly	2.13
I have good friends in school	1.79
Teachers continued explaining until all understood	1.69
All pupils were treated the same way in class	1.61
Teachers have been interested in my well-being	1.47
Teachers treated pupils' opinions with respect	1.28
Something of mine was stolen	0.80
I was bullied by other pupils	0.56

Note: all coefficients are in relation to the strongly disagree category. Each coefficient gives the odds, other things being equal, of a pupil agreeing with each statement about their experience also agreeing with the more general 'outcome' statement.

Of course, the model is only a set of associations rather than a test of influence. But the model is strong in variation explained, with clear and consistent coefficients, representing a logical order of analysis (looking at the individuals themselves first, then their peers, and then their experiences). Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that they provide evidence of the potential impact of teachers and other pupils on whether school is deemed fair.

Learning to trust at school?

Understandably, a very similar picture emerges from consideration of which pupils have learnt to trust teachers to act fairly on their behalf. Around 44% of pupils agreed that their teachers were generally fair. There is a weak link with for pupil background, and no school mix here at all. Young people in England are more likely (1.75 times) to agree that their teachers are fair than pupils from the other countries, a strong indication of underlying good relationships between teachers and pupils in England (EGREES 2008). Those from families in which the father has a professional occupation are slightly more likely to agree that they trusted teachers (1.15 times). However, the combined influence of these background variables is small (see above).

Table 5 – Coefficients for pupil/school experience variables and whether trusting or not

Teachers punished bad behaviour fairly	1.72
Teachers treated my opinion with respect	1.67
Teachers have been interested in my well-being	1.67
Teachers treated all pupils' opinions with respect	1.67
My marks usually reflected the quality of my work	1.61
Teachers encouraged me to make my own mind up	1.45
My marks usually reflected the effort I made	1.43
Teachers continued explaining until all understood	1.32

Note: all coefficients in this table and the others that follow are calculated in relation to the strongly disagree category. Not all variables are displayed.

It is again the pupils' experiences at school that are the main determinants of trust (Table 5). Positive results and relations with teachers are important factors related to whether pupils trust others – not perhaps very surprisingly. Teachers have to be seen

to be following principles of equity properly (as suggested at the start of the paper) by respecting all pupils, respecting individual pupil autonomy, and showing concern for all. They must also be prepared to reward and punish some pupils when this is warranted, and to remember not to carry this discrimination over into areas of school life where it is not.

Pedagogically, teachers need to ensure that pupils feel in control of their own learning, and be prepared to keep explaining new ideas. The reasons given for trusting teachers are very similar to those for enjoying school generally, as found in the UK (Gorard and See 2010).

Willingness to help others

Around 52% of pupils reported that they were happy for a teacher to give extra help to a pupil with a specific difficulty (even at their own expense in terms of time). The remaining 48% mostly reported that all pupils should have equal attention, regardless of their learning needs. In this case, therefore, pupils are almost evenly split about a crucial issue for equity and for responsibility theory. Is help given in class fairer when evenly distributed like respect or when it is given according to need? The model increases the accuracy of prediction, compared to the baseline, by 36% of the otherwise unexplained variation in responses. Of this increase, more than half is attributable to the pupil background, and just under half to experiences at school.

Insofar as we can explain pupil willingness for others to get extra help, pupil background is a substantial component. Nevertheless, the sex, attainment, and country of origin (whether born in the country of survey or not) of the pupil are not related to this criterion of justice. Also unrelated are the occupations, education and country of origin of parents. Those living in England (72%) are more likely to approve of help given to others than those in Belgium (59%), Czech Republic (44%), France (51%) and Italy (36%). In addition, given that the vignette used to pose the question is about difficulty in reading, it is interesting that those form whom the language of the survey country is not their first language are generally happier for a pupil struggling with reading to be given extra help (1.26 times as likely). These differences could be partly

explicable, therefore, by the proportion of recent immigrants in each national system, and partly by the levels of selection or tracking. In England, for example, there is a relatively high level of recent immigration, and schools are generally more inclusive of pupils with special needs and more comprehensive in intake. Thus, pupils in England are more likely to have direct experience of someone needing extra help for reasons that would not be deemed that persons' responsibility (see above). Familiarity with such events may have persuaded them that such differential treatment is fair. Pupils in slightly less egalitarian systems are more likely to want equal treatment perhaps because the talent and motivation of pupils is more similar in their teaching groups, and so any difficulties are more likely to be deemed the responsibility of the individual (to do with effort perhaps).

A large number of school experience variables are not relevant to increasing the quality of the prediction, including whether a pupil repeats a year or more. But there is a very clear relationship, once the preceding factors such as pupil background are accounted for, between pupils' reports of justice in school and their willingness for a pupil in difficulty to receive extra help. Being respected by teachers, with teachers not getting angry in front of others, not punishing pupils unfairly, concerned for pupil well-being and prepared to explain until everyone understands, are key to pupils reporting being prepared to support help for those with difficulties. Taken at face value this suggests a possible role for teachers in educating citizens who are tolerant and supportive of the difficulties of others (Table 6). They do this not only through citizenship pedagogy but through their exemplification of good citizenship in action (Gorard 2007a, 2007b). There is similarly a key role for the pupils. Having friends is important, as is avoidance of being mistreated by other pupils. Those reporting being hurt, bullied and having things stolen by other pupils at school are all less likely to support extra help for others. Perhaps this is because, as others have found, pupils who find school unsafe tend to have poorer relationships with their teachers anyway (Boulton et al. 2009). This is not a school mix effect (e.g. where those attending schools with low levels of theft are more supportive anyway). Thus, it appears to stem directly from treatment by others. There could be a role for teachers here then, in preventing such mistreatment and educating the potential 'bullies' and 'thieves'.

Table 6 – Coefficients for pupil/school experience variables and willingness to help or not

I have good friends in school	1.70
Teachers were interested in my well-being	1.27
Teachers got angry with a pupil	0.81

Integration or multiculturalism?

The last two 'outcome' variables relate to society beyond school, and the analysis is concerned with the extent to which experiences at school might be relevant to pupils learning about the wider issues. A slight majority (54%) of pupils agree that people moving to their country should adopt local customs. Pupils in the Czech Republic, where there are far fewer recent immigrants, are considerably more likely to agree that immigrants should adapt to the customs of their new home (1.43 times) than pupils in other countries. This difference could be due to a lack of experience of immigrants in the Czech Republic among all pupils, or it could be due to a lack of the immigrants themselves among the respondents who might otherwise disagree with the idea and prefer a form of multiculturalism. The latter interpretation is supported by the fact that pupils with fathers (1.49) and mothers (1.19) born in the country of the survey were more likely to agree with the integration idea. Pupils born in the survey country (1.20) and speaking the language of that country (1.23) were also more likely to agree. Pupils with recent immigrant experience were overall far less likely to agree to everyone adopting the customs of their new country.

Turning to the school experience results, perhaps because recent immigrants are less likely to report having good friends at school, and because they are less in favour of adopting local customs, these two ideas are strongly linked (Table 7). Similarly, recent immigrants are more likely to have friends born elsewhere. Low attainers at school are both more likely to have a friend who is also a low attainer and to want immigrants to fit in. But again, teachers apparently misusing or confusing two principles of justice and treating hardworking pupils better even where it is not

relevant, and not respecting the opinions of pupils, are linked to what could be construed as a long-term negative outcome of schooling.

Table 7 – Coefficients for pupil/school experience variables and agreeing that immigrants should adopt local customs

I have good friends in school	1.67
I have a friend who gets low marks at school	1.32
Hardworking pupils were usually treated best	1.15
Teachers treated my opinion with respect	0.81
I have a friend who does not come from [country of survey]	0.68

Predicting levels of trust beyond school

The final reported 'outcome' was whether most people can be trusted, and 49% of pupils reported trusting people generally. Pupil background characteristics explain some of the variation in outcomes but not as much as might be expected. And this influence mostly operates at the individual level, with no evidence of a school mix effect. Of the increase in our ability to make correct predictions over and above the baseline, nearly half is attributable to experiences of justice at school. This is after background and parental support have been taken into account, and so represents reasonable evidence of the influence of school even on a societal outcome, just as with learning to trust teachers (see above). The sex, language, and country of origin of the pupil are not related to this issue of learning to trust most people. Nor are the occupations of parents and country of origin of mothers.

There is a very clear relationship between pupils' reports of justice in school and their sense of trust in other people. Pupils who have repeated one or more years are slightly less likely to be trusting (41%) than those who have not (50%), perhaps linked to the lack of grade repetition in England where teachers are deemed fairer. Those who

report getting along well with their teachers, and trusting their teachers to be fair, aremore trusting in general. Of course, there is an element of tautology in several of these 'independent' variables. However, it is actual experiences at school that are most strongly related to trust. Pupils who regard school and teachers as fair, and the meting out of punishments as fair, and who have not been hurt or isolated by other pupils nor had something stolen are, perhaps understandably, more trusting. As with others outcomes, this suggests a clear role for teachers in educating citizens who are generally trusting of others. They do this through their exemplification of good (or indeed poor) citizenship in action. There is also a more direct role for teachers in preventing the mistreatment of some pupils by others and educating any potential 'bullies' or 'thieves' (Table 8).

Table 8 – Coefficients for pupil/school experience variables and trusting people or not

School was fair	1.40
I enjoyed working with other pupils	1.27
Teachers punished fairly	1.23
Marks reflect quality	1.18
I trusted my teachers to be fair	1.17
I have a friend who gets low marks	1.14
All pupils were treated the same	1.10
Something of mine was stolen	0.89
I felt invisible to my friends	0.86
Teacher got angry with me in front of the class	0.86
I got discouraged easily	0.82

Avoidance of bullying, personal violence, and theft are related to learning to trust others – or put the other way, the least trusting are those who have been victims of bullying, violence, and theft at school. Therefore, there is an argument that what happens at school differentially influences pupils' sense of what is just and fair, and what wider society is like. And a lot of what happens is the direct responsibility of other pupils, while only indirectly due to the (in)actions of teachers. If citizenship

education entails learning appropriate levels of trust in others, then the level of reported mistreating of pupils by other pupils is a clear barrier to progress.

Implications for equity

It is important to note that many pupils enjoy their education, having been treated well at school, and feel that their learning has purpose. Most have good friends, and only a minority report unpleasant episodes such as bullying. Many pupils trust their teachers and find them helpful and supportive. Also, these experiences show very little patterning in terms of the kinds of pupil background variables so often found to influence school attainment. In several respects, pupil background, their family, and the type of school or institution they attend are only weakly related to their experiences of justice and injustice, if at all. The reports from pupils in high and low attaining, high and low poverty, and selective and comprehensive schools do not differ substantially. Those outside mainstream schooling were in many ways the most positive about their treatment and experiences. Recent immigrants generally reported being well treated, and are at least as likely as others to have good relationships with teachers, and high hopes for the future. And the findings are the same across all five countries, except where noted.

The variables used to form sub-groups such as sex, social class and so on, might be poor measures of underlying variation but they are standard analytical categories in the sociology of education. The analysis also included a wider variety of variables, such as attainment and first language, than is common in sociology traditions. Therefore, the first conclusion is that the experiences of pupils are largely unstratified by their background and origin. In general, this could be a good finding for equity if equal treatment is the appropriate response to potential disadvantage. There is no evidence here that pupils with early disadvantage are having that position exacerbated through the interaction of teachers and pupils (or at least not more so than other pupils).

The fact that the differences in school experiences reported by pupils are not especially stratified should make them easier to address, in contrast to those

inequalities in attainment that developed countries have tried to reduce over decades. The situation is not ideal, because there clearly are still injustices occurring. And, of course, it is hardly likely that everyone will ever be completely satisfied with their treatment. But the more widespread and repeated issues identified can be addressed, more easily, and for very little resource. This might be done mostly through reminding developing teachers of the underlying principles of justice and the domains within which learners see them as applicable.

While the link between pupil background and most school experiences is weak, the link between school experiences and pupils' views on justice at school and beyond is strong (as suggested by some prior small-scale studies such as Covell 2010). It is also repeated across many aspects of the results. School experiences can therefore be imagined to be part of a determining sequence in the creation or entrenchment of pupils' views on what a fair world would be like and whether a fair world is possible. Interactional justice at school has long-term beneficial and not so beneficial impacts. Young people are influenced by their life at school, and learn to trust others partly as a consequence of how trustworthy others have appeared to be so far in their lives, for example. Experience at school is strongly related to feelings of trust about people more generally. Those for whom school was fair, and their teachers were just, were nearly twice as likely as others to report trusting the government of their country and most people in general. It seems possible that pupils' experience of school contributes to their image of what wider society will be like. If so, teachers, leaders and policy-makers have a direct responsibility to assist pupils in making positive but appropriately critical judgements. Note that this is not primarily a pedagogical or curriculum issue. Pupils learn about what society is like through their lives at school. Put simply, there is little point in overtly teaching that people can be trusted if pupils are not trusted in schools, and teachers do not behave according to what pupils see as widespread principles of justice.

Of course, whether the actual outcomes discussed are desirable is a debatable issue. Perhaps it is not that young people should learn to trust people, rather than that they should learn who they can trust. The point is that whatever the outcomes are, these kinds of issues are partly related to experiences of education beyond the formal curriculum. This is presumably hardly surprising, but what has been suggested in the

evidence presented here is that pupils have a generally consistent model of fairness, using the apparently contradictory principles in different settings, and that they learn about unfairness partly through inconsistent application of these principles by their teachers. Positive school experiences and relationships with teachers are associated with a lower likelihood of agreeing to violence and deception, whereas negative experiences are linked to the more 'negative' view in traditional terms. These positive experiences are almost exclusively about teachers and the principles of justice that they apply to routine school events like teachers explaining topics well and getting on with their pupils. It is reasonable to suggest that teachers have a role in discouraging agreement with violence and deception not just by teaching about it, and not just by displaying their beliefs about violence in their work. Most countries have abolished corporal punishment anyway. Teachers can encourage more positive beliefs about these wider social issues merely by illustrating through their normal everyday teaching behaviour that a just world is possible.

It is quite clear that pupils' willingness for others to receive help, their trust in people both at school and more widely, their experience of school as fair, and their views on violence and the integration of recent immigrants, among others, are all influenced by their experiences of schooling. Insofar as we are able to prefer one of the outcomes in any of these areas (such as that pupils express a willingness to help others, rather than not help), then the more 'positive' outcomes are mostly encouraged by:

- appropriate teacher respect for all pupils and their opinions
- teachers allowing pupils the autonomy to work at their own speed
- teachers using discrimination only in its proper domains
- and lack of abuse at the hands of other pupils

Those pupils treated best at school tend to have the most positive outlook on trust, civic values and sense of justice. And *vice versa*. The worst reported incidents at school, both in pupil discussions and in the survey itself, came from the actions of other pupils in the form of social isolation, bullying, stealing and violence. As the evidence shows, teachers still have two ways in which they can take responsibility for these actions by other pupils. First, and most obviously, teachers must stamp these

incidents out wherever they are encountered. Perhaps more significantly, teachers have a more general role in helping families and others in inhibiting such negative cycles of behaviour. Pupils who are prepared to condone lying and hitting another pupil are themselves influenced, at least to a small extent, by their experiences of justice in school.

An example of equity in classroom interactions is represented by teachers' respect for their pupils' opinions, even when they might disagree with the pupils. Disagreement is an important part of learning. Encouraging the ideas, arguments and evidence advanced by pupils, on the other hand, encourages learning. There is widespread agreement among all young people that all pupils should be treated with respect by teachers, their opinions should be valued, and that they should not be humiliated in any way. Few report that this takes place consistently, however. A common view was that teachers had pupils who were their favourites, that rewards and punishments were not always applied fairly, and that certain groups of pupils were treated less fairly than others. There is, therefore, a clear mismatch between what pupils want and what they experience, in many ways. This needs to be addressed urgently.

Pupils want marks to reflect the quality of their work, or the effort they put in. Where necessary, they want punishments to be meted out consistently. Too many pupils report that this does not happen. Pupils do not want hard-working pupils to be favoured (except in assessment terms). Most report that this does not happen. Pupils are happy for their assessed work to be discriminated in terms of quality and effort, but they complain that hard-working, high-attaining pupils should not otherwise be favoured by teachers. This is a clear and strict application of the principle of merit, and one which teachers are reported as widely misusing, by using it in the wrong settings.

Putting these views and experiences together, positive experiences of school and home tend to be associated with pupils having positive principles of justice at school, who are tolerant, sharing, and inclusive. Negative experiences of school tend to be associated with pupils who are prepared to tolerate and countenance these kinds of injustice at school. Those who had experienced teachers giving extra help to other pupils who were struggling were more likely to be in favour of extra help being given

to others. Those who had been bullied or hurt at school were less in favour. In terms of agreeing, conditionally, that it is 'ok' (the term used in the English instrument) to hit someone who has been insulting or lie to avoid punishment, there is considerable variation related to past experiences. Those pupils reporting serious negative experiences of school such as being hurt, and perhaps less serious but more chronic injustice at the hands of teachers, were considerably more likely to tolerate or even support hitting and lying in turn.

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